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The Pope spoke of this obligation when he received in audience today the South American bishops, in Rome for their five-yearly visit.

The Holy Father did not make direct reference to the tension between the Church and state in Hugo Chávez's Venezuela -- tensions perhaps best symbolized by the twin attacks against the apostolic nunciature earlier this year. In fact, the state's relations with faith-groups have become so troubled that the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** included Venezuela on its Watch List in its annual report released May 1.